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Sermons of Distinction: a Vindication of the Study of Distinctiones Collections

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Abstract:

Questo articolo esamina una fonte trascurata ma di grande ricchezza intellettuale: le raccolte di *distinctiones*, strumenti ampiamente utilizzati dai predicatori medievali per analizzare termini biblici e strutturare concetti dottrinali. Emerse alla fine del XII secolo, le *distinctiones* si svilupparono a partire dall'esegesi scolastica, fino a diventare elementi fondamentali della composizione del sermone. L'articolo ricostruisce lo sviluppo storico di queste raccolte, ne analizza le evoluzioni stilistiche e ne evidenzia l'influenza diffusa sulla prassi dei predicatori. Attraverso studi di caso, si mostra come le *distinctiones* abbiano permesso ai predicatori di elaborare sermoni memorabili e solidamente radicati nella Scrittura. Nonostante la loro centralità nella cultura intellettuale e pastorale del Medioevo, le *distinctiones* hanno ricevuto un'attenzione accademica molto inferiore rispetto ad altri "ingredienti" del sermone, come l'*exemplum*. L'articolo invita dunque a un rinnovato interesse per questa fonte, soprattutto alla luce dei nuovi strumenti digitali, come il progetto *Distinguo*, che rende oggi accessibili ampi corpora di *distinctiones* per uno studio sistematico.

Parole chiave: Distinctiones; Storia intellettuale; predicazione

This article explores an overlooked but intellectually rich source, the *distinctiones* collections – tools widely used by medieval preachers to analyze biblical words and structure concepts. Emerging in the late twelfth century, *distinctiones* evolved from scholastic exegesis into essential building blocks of sermon composition. The article traces the historical development of these collections, examines their stylistic shifts, and highlights their pervasive influence on preaching practices. Through case studies, it demonstrates how *distinctiones* enabled preachers to craft memorable, biblically grounded sermons. Despite their centrality to medieval intellectual and pastoral culture, *distinctiones* have received far less scholarly attention than other sermon "ingredients" like the *exemplum*. The article advocates for renewed research into this source, especially in light of new digital tools such as the *Distinguo* project, which now makes large corpora of *distinctiones* accessible for systematic study.

Keywords: Distinctiones; Intellectual History; Preaching

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Sermons of Distinction: a Vindication of the Study of *Distinctiones* Collections

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The study of medieval preaching – and its main source, the sermon – offers a privileged insight into intellectual work and its techniques. This vast system of mass communication of the Church's message and its values,¹ though consisting ultimately in an oral performance, left a wealth of written traces. If we have detailed information on the performance of a few exceptional preachers, like Bernardino da Siena,² they are but a drop in the ocean of sermons which bear witness to the ordinary, daily preaching that was offered through the whole of Latin Christendom.³ Rather than the fame of their author (often anonymous), their rhetorical qualities or their theological sophistication, what makes medieval sermons precious is their very abundance, and the continuity and regularity with which the Christian people were exposed to them. Through sermons, we can approach the persuasion strategies, and also the tools used by the preachers in their intellectual work.

Among those tools was the *distinctio*⁴. This rhetorical tool, extremely widespread in the Middle Ages from the late twelfth century onwards, consisted in analyzing a word or notion according to its various senses, properties or characteristics, and in supporting each of them with biblical quotations. This notion- or word-based approach to the Scripture stimulates the creation of new texts, linked themselves to the biblical narrative. From a linear *lectio*, which Peter the Chanter considered the first stage of the study of the Scripture which culminated in *praedicatio*,⁵ preachers move to using the Bible dictionary of concepts, where the comely arrangement of senses takes precedence over the narration. Each *distinctio* offers, in a more or less structured fashion, a spiritual interpretation of a word stemming on principle from the Bible. *Distinctiones* could be used to divide the *thema* of a sermon, as advised in numerous *artes praedicandi*,⁶ helping preachers to create a bridge between the biblical text and the pastoral message of the sermon. Since they articulate the various senses and

¹ On medieval preaching as a system of mass communication, see especially: Louis Jacques Bataillon, *La prédication au XIII^e siècle en France et en Italie* (collected writings) (Aldershot, Variorum, 1993); David d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), and idem, *Medieval Marriage Sermons* (Oxford: OUP, 2001); Nicole Bériou, *L'avènement des Maîtres de la Parole* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1998).

² See Bernardino da Siena, *Prediche volgari sul Campo di Siena 1427*, ed. Carlo Delcorno (Milano: Rusconi, 1989).

³ For the 1150-1350 period only, the reference index lists more than 140 000 surviving sermons. See Johannes-Baptist Schneyer, *Repertorium der Lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150-1350* (Münster: Westfalen, 1971-1990).

⁴ For an overview of *distinctiones* collections, see the online resource [DISTINGUO](https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/), <https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/> (dir. Marjorie Burghart). For reference studies, see also the bibliography at the end of this article.

⁵ "In tribus igitur consistit stadium sacrae Scripturae: circa lectionem, disputationem, et praedicationem." (The study of the Bible consists in three things: their reading, discussion, and preaching."). *Verbum abbreviatum*, c. I, PL 205, 25 AB, quoted in Bataillon, 'De la lectio à la praedicatio', 560.

⁶ On *distinctions*, *divisio* and *artes praedicandi*, see Siefried Wenzel, *Medieval Artes Praedicandi* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2015), 65-75.

meanings of a word in the Scripture, *distinctiones* contribute to create a network of biblical quotations that grant their authority to the sermon and root the preacher's message in the Bible. Seen through the prism of *distinctiones*, the Bible becomes a powerful and versatile communication tool, adaptable to virtually any pastoral purpose.

In this article, I will briefly outline the history of the emergence of distinction collections as preaching aids from the end of the twelfth century, before discussing the appeal of those collections not only for medieval readers but also for modern historians. Finally, I will highlight the paradox that marks the study of this intellectual tool.

Distinctiones seem to have their origins in twelfth-century exegetical techniques developed in the schools, but they were soon adopted by preachers who used them to structure their sermons. Evidence of this usage goes as far back as the 1160s, but the earliest preacher known to have fully embraced this technique in his sermons was Peter Comestor († c. 1178), soon followed by a cohort of enthusiasts.⁷ Those early adopters spurred the creation of the first collections of distinctions in the 1190s, for instance Peter of Cornwall's *Pantheologus*, Peter the Chanter's own *Distinctiones Abel*, or Alain de Lille's *Summa quot modis*,⁸ and the availability of those collections spurred in its turn the use of distinctions by preachers.⁹ Starting with strictly biblical words, those collections soon expanded their scope to include entries that were not strictly speaking biblical, but relevant to pastoral care and preaching.¹⁰ At the same time, with the quick success of the *sermo modernus* at the turn of the thirteenth century, came a shift in the aesthetic sensitivity, giving a crucial place to the structure of the sermon. The masterful use of *distinctiones* quickly became the mark of great preachers, as seen in this quote from Peter of Cornwall who, in the prologue of his work, the *Pantheologus*, praises a sermon he has heard delivered by the bishop of London Gilbert Foliot at the end of the twelfth century:

‘Totus enim sermo ille quibusdam distinctionibus uariatus et flosculis uerborum et sententiarum depictus et copiosa auctoritatum subiectione roboratus, a principio per tramites suos ad idem principium decurrebat et recurrebat ut areolas agrorum multiplicibus riuulorum tractibus uniformi dissimilitudine exaratas et multiplici uernantis germinis fructu inter carnalium decursus fecundatas cogitares nec hominem sed super hominem esse, qui tanta auctoritatum

⁷ Rouse & Rouse, ‘*Statim invenire*’, 215.

⁸ The *Pantheologus* remains unedited. The *Distinctiones Abel* (sometimes called *Summa Abel*) edited by S. Barney were published by Brepols in 2020 (CCCM 288-288A). Alain de Lille's *Summa quot modis* is printed under the title *Distinctiones dictionum theologialium* in the *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 210, but the edition must be used with caution: the text does not correspond closely to the one found in the manuscripts. Readers will find a “practical” version of the text, closer to the manuscripts, freely available on the DISTINGUO website: <https://distinguo.humanum.fr/collections/alanus-de-insula-dist-summa> [consulted on 14 July 2025]. For more details on this collection, see Ainonen, ‘Manuscripts, Editions and Textual Interpretation’.

⁹ Rouse & Rouse, ‘*Statim invenire*’, 214: ‘Such a pattern of development is reflected in all the searchable tools of the thirteenth century: the needs of users motivate the making of the tool which, by virtue of its accessibility, increases the use.’

¹⁰ Bataillon, ‘Les instruments de travail des prédicateurs au XIII^e siècle’, 200.

copia per singulas sermonis distinctiones superhabundare potuisset affirmares.’¹¹

(‘The whole sermon was varied by certain *distinctiones*, adorned with flowers of words and sentences and supported by a copious array of authorities. It ran backwards and forwards on its path from its starting point back to the same starting point, similar to plots in a field, their dissimilarity ploughed into a uniform shape by a multitude of rivulets, and despite worldly vicissitudes was made, with varied seeds of blooming flowers, to be so fertile that you would have thought that it was not a human work but a superhuman one, superabundant with such a wealth of authorities in every single *distinctio* of the sermon!’)¹²

Peter of Cornwall was so impressed by this technique that he decided to write a collection of *distinctiones* himself (from which this quote is taken).

Distinctiones took a more and more prominent place in preaching, becoming one of the key ingredients of a sermon, and even one of the defining features of its beauty. The authors of *distinctiones* collections arranged their material in a variety of fashions, but eventually yielded to what Richard and Mary Rouse called ‘the reluctant but steady shift from rational to alphabetical order’. Collections flourished in the thirteenth century, with the Mendicant friars playing a growing role, becoming the major producers of distinction collections in the second half of the century. The “best-selling” collections of this time, all of which were made available through the *pecia* system in Paris¹³, were produced by Mendicant friars: the massive *Distinctiones* of Maurice de Provins (OFM),¹⁴ those by Nicolas de Gorran (OP),¹⁵ and the two collections attributed to Nicolas de Biard (OP):¹⁷ the *Distinctiones*¹⁸ and the *Summa de abstinentia*.¹⁹

¹¹ Transcribed in Hunt, ‘English Learning in the Late Twelfth Century’, 41.

¹² The first half of this translation is by Hunt ‘English Learning in the Late Twelfth Century’, 33-34; the second part is my own, but owes a lot to the friendly help of George Ferzoco

¹³ The *pecia* system was a medieval method for copying and disseminating manuscript works, mainly used from the 13th century onward in university centres (Paris, Bologna, Oxford, etc.). It was designed to make the production of texts faster, more reliable, and more standardized. On this system, see for instance the recent study by Nikolaus Weichselbaumer, ‘*Quod Exemplaria vera habeant et correcta*: Concerning the Distribution and Purpose of the Pecia System’. In *Specialist Markets in the Early Modern Book World*, edited by Richard Kirwan and Sophie Mullins. Brill, 2015, 331-350.

¹⁴ On Maurice’s *Distinctiones*, see: Denifle & Châtelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, t. I, 648, n. 530; Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*, t. III, 557, n° 5566.

¹⁵ On Nicolas de Gorran’s *Distinctiones*, see: Denifle & Châtelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, t. II, p. 108, n. 642; Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*, n° 5740; Kaeppli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, t. III, n° 3090; Serventi, ‘Did Giordano da Pisa Use the *Distinctiones* of Nicolas Gorran?’.

¹⁷ The very identity of Nicolas de Biard, whose biography is still unknown, has long been uncertain: he was simply known as a ‘friar’. Sophie Delmas has recently tried to demonstrate that he was actually a Dominican (Delmas, ‘La *Summa de abstinentia* attribuée à Nicolas de Biard’).

¹⁸ On this work, see: Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*, n° 5693-5694; Kaeppli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, n° 3045; Bataillon, ‘The Tradition of Nicholas of Biard’s *Distinctiones*’.

¹⁹ On this work, see: Kaeppli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, n° 3046; Delmas, ‘La *Summa de abstinentia* attribuée à Nicolas de Biard’; idem, ‘Les recueils de distinctions sont-ils des florilèges?’. There are at least 184 extant manuscripts of this work (Delmas, ‘La *Summa de abstinentia* attribuée à Nicolas de Biard’, 309 and 312-316).

The strong influence of the *distinctiones* can also be felt in the sermon manuscripts themselves, where anonymous medieval readers often manifested a discreet yet meticulous interest in them, drawing accolades in the margins to highlight the structure of distinctions, or adding an *index distinctionum* to sermon collections.²⁰ Readers also sometimes doodled schematic annotations in the margins, outlining a particularly useful *distinctio* and creating short, visual abstracts of the distinctions (see **figure 1**)

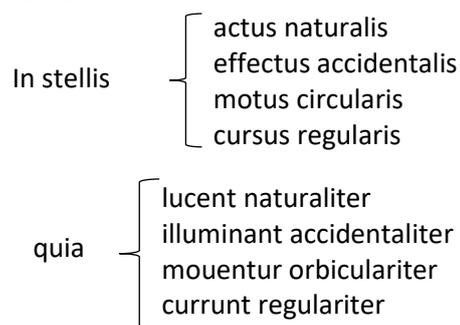
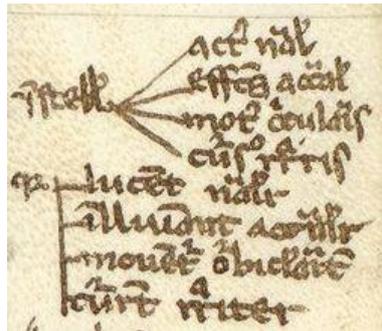


Fig. 1: schema of a distinction on the stars, in the margin of a 14th c. sermon manuscript Assisi, Sacro convento, 501, f. 12r

With the ever-rising interest of preachers for *distinctiones*, there seems to have been a form of cross-fertilization between sermons and distinction collections. Of course preachers used more and more distinctions in their sermons with the advent of the *sermo modernus*. But the style of the distinction collections seems to have evolved at the same time, probably to address the needs of preachers. From a more exegetical perspective, they developed into short essays of practical theology, ready to be recycled in preaching. To illustrate summarily this evolution, I propose in **Appendix 1** the text of three *distinctiones*²¹ I have chosen distinctions on the word *Vinum* (wine) because its frequent appearance as a key element in various books of the Bible, especially in the New Testament (Jesus transforming water into wine during the marriage at Cana, and of course Jesus using wine during the Last Supper to signify the New Covenant), explaining the cultural

²⁰ On the indexes of sermon manuscripts, see Pellegrini, '*Tabula super sermones*', and idem, '*Indici per predicare*'.

²¹ This selection is not representative of the diversity of earlier distinction collections, among which some seem to have been already more oriented towards preaching. For a more detailed picture of those earlier collections, see Ainonen, '*Making new from old*'.

importance of wine in the Christianity, accompanied by a long exegetical tradition. But this is only a random example among hundreds of others: distinctions were made on a large variety of words and concepts, from concrete realities (like *vinum, rota, leo, ...*) to emotions (*letitia, timor, amor, ...*), vices and virtues, abstract concepts (*memoria, peccatum, predicatio*), or actions (*accedere, deridere, pascere, ...*). As for the three examples given in Appendix 1, each text is the *distinctio* proposed for the word *Vinum* (wine), but they are drawn from different collections, dating from different periods.

The first text (1.a) comes from the anonymous²² *Liber qui dicitur Angelus*, a collection dating from the late twelfth or very early thirteenth century. If the images offered can be powerful, the fourteen spiritual interpretations of *vinum* are listed with no self-evident order. Each entry is very short, and consists simply in a possible sense of *vinum* together with one or more supporting biblical quotation.

The second text (1.b) is drawn from the *Distinctiones* by Maurice de Provins. The Franciscan friar probably composed them after 1248, and they were already circulating in Paris in 1272, shortly before they appeared on the *pecia* list of 1274.²³ The various senses are grouped in four main categories, corresponding to four types of wine: the wine of fault (*vinum culpe*), of punishment (*pene*), of education (*doctrine*), and grace (*gratie*). Each of those types is further detailed into sub-varieties. Those, however, are still expressed concisely, without much flourish.

The third text (1.c) is one of the *Distinctiones* by Nicolas de Gorran, a Dominican preacher. The date of composition of his collection is not precisely known, but can be situated within the last quarter of the thirteenth century.²⁴ The tendency to structure the different senses in a meaningful way, already at work in Maurice de Provins's work, is confirmed. This time the division is threefold, considering the wine offered in their tavern respectively by the Devil, the world, and God, and the properties of those different wines. Further subdivisions are in limited number, which can be interpreted as a desire to facilitate the memorisation of the text. The general style of this *distinctio* is close to what one would find in a typical model sermon of that time. The comparison with the text in Appendix 2, a *distinctio* effectively used in a model sermon composed in the 1260s or 1270s by Guibert de Tournai, OFM, attests to this resemblance.

Distinctions pervaded preaching in the thirteenth century, becoming both the backbone and the most refined micro-structures of sermons. They provided preachers with the versatile patterns they needed for the great kaleidoscope of preaching to operate, to borrow an image from David d'Avray.²⁵ Unlike encyclopaediae, which were

²² This work has been erroneously ascribed to Adam of Dryburgh, also to Garnier de Rochefort or de Langres (ca. 1140 - ca. 1225) but even for the latter the evidence is still disputed, and the collection can reasonably be considered anonymous. See Ainonen, 'Manuscripts, Editions and Textual Interpretation', note 5 p. 14-15.

²³ Bataillon, 'Intermédiaires entre les traités de morale pratique et les sermons', 214-215.

²⁴ Rouse & Rouse, 'Biblical *Distinctiones* in the Thirteenth Century', 31; Bataillon, 'L'agir humain d'après les distinctions bibliques du XIII^e siècle', 777.

²⁵ 'Or again (for the similitude habit is infectious), the preaching of the friars operated rather like a kaleidoscope: the patterns of dogmatic and moral ideas were continually being shaken up, from sermon to sermon, to make new combinations, equally symmetrical'. (D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars*, 246-247).

developing at the same time, their purpose was not to describe the world,²⁶ but rather to organize it, to put it in order so that it could make sense and be used to convey a message. In Appendix 2, I propose as an example the text of a distinction on the olive tree (*oliva*) taken this time not from a *distinctiones* collection, but as it appears in a model sermon for ordinations by Guibert de Tournai, OFM (†1284). The *thema* of the sermon is *Filii tui sicut novella olivarum*, Ps. 127, 3 ("your children will be like olive shoots around your table"). The author proceeds to the *dilatatio* by considering in verse the three things pertinent to those who are being ordained: first the conformity to the Lord, as indicated by "your children"; second, the purity of incorruptibility, as indicated by "like olive shoots"; finally, the dignity of the ordination, as indicated by "around your table". As he develops each of these points in the sermon, Guibert uses distinctions in each part: rather than commenting linearly an episode of the Bible involving the olive tree, a distinction gives structure to the sermon, and also allows the preacher to mention multiple biblical citations to lend authority to his affirmations. A reader of his collection deemed the distinction on the olive tree used in the second part interesting enough to draw a schema in the margin of a manuscript, to give a readily memorizable abstract of its contents:

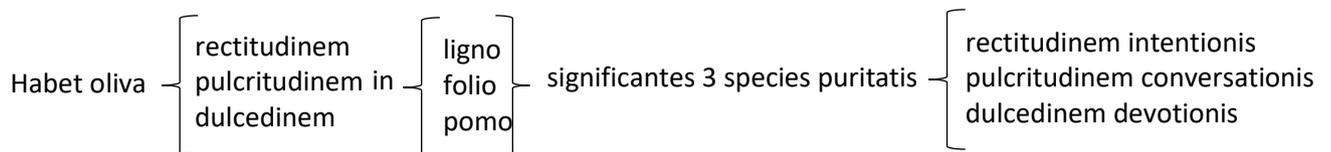
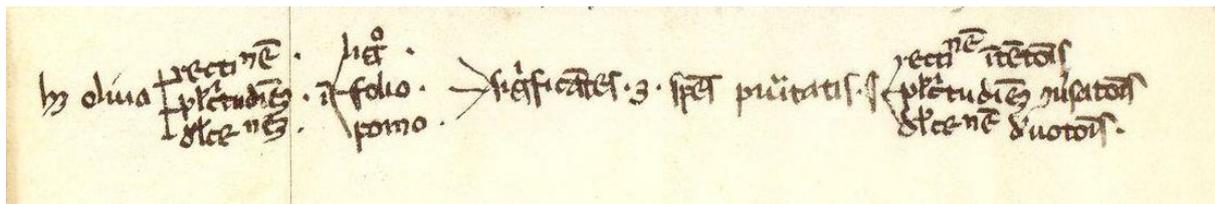


Fig. 2: schema of a distinction on the olive tree, in the margin of a 14th c. sermon manuscript (Assisi, Sacro convento, 501, f. 23v)

The olive tree is characterized by straightness (of its wood), beauty (of its foliage), and sweetness (of its fruit), which represent the three facets of purity, i.e. straightness of the intention, beauty of the conduct, and sweetness of the devotion. Each part of the distinction makes use of a different biblical verse or episodes: the first is supported by a citation from Apocalypse 11, 4: *Hi sunt due oliue et duo candelabra lucentia in conspectu Domini terre stantes* ("these are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth"); the second, by the verse from Genesis 8, 11, where a dove returns to Noah's ark *portans ramum oliue uirentibus foliis in ore suo* ("carrying it its beak a branch of olive with fresh green leaves"); the third, by a verse from II Kings 15, 30, *Dauid ascendebat cliuum oliuarum, scandens et flens*,

²⁶ On the relationship between encyclopediae and *distinctiones* collection, see Dahan, 'Encyclopédies et exégèse de la Bible aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles'.

aperto capite et nudis pedibus incedens ("David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, with his head covered and walking barefoot").

It is most evident that the author of this distinction did not aim to describe an olive tree. His purpose was a moralist's one: he wanted to convey a message on purity and its conditions, and to this aim he used the olive tree, a familiar element to his audience, as a catalyst for the message. This example also illustrates the mnemotechnic potential of *distinctiones*. Distinction, as a technique, was of course an integral part of the division/composition process that the arts of memory counted as one of the bases of memorisation. But beyond that, they gave opportunities to the preachers to create powerful images: here with the olive tree, the preacher created a visual/concrete equivalent of the concept he wished to communicate, with a mental image not so different, in the end, from the 'active images' (*imagines agentes*) recommended by the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.²⁷

The study of distinctions can therefore help us understand better the methods through which medieval preachers conveyed their message, but also their representation of the world, which was based on abstract, connected schemas. Here lies a paradox: despite all their interest, *distinctiones* and *distinctiones* collections have been very little studied, especially as an intellectual technique.²⁸ The bibliography at the end of this article illustrates that fact: very few distinction collections have been edited,²⁹ and even their manuscript tradition is generally poorly known, not to mention their usage. There have been some studies of limited scope, on individual authors or works, but despite a flutter of interest in the 1980s with works by Father Bataillon and Richard & Mary Rouse there has been no systematic survey of the distinction technique, its origins, its relationships with rhetoric, and more importantly the way those collections were used. This situation is in striking contrast with the interest scholars have shown for the *exemplum*, which, especially since the 1970s, has been the object of many editions, finding aids, and studies ranging from narrative techniques to the links with tales and popular culture.³⁰ The *exemplum* is, alas, the only ingredient of sermons which has been the subject of such a thorough scrutiny. For distinctions, which like *exempla* were gathered in collections and became popular in preaching at the same period, there is no authoritative study tracing the origins and developments of the technique, its relationship with rhetoric or dialectics, the actual use of distinctions in preaching and beyond, etc. It is probably the sheer immensity of the task ahead and the paucity of reference works and finding aids that discouraged new research. It is striking that even a list of distinctions collections has never before been established in an exhaustive manner. This would be a research topic

²⁷ On this topic, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, and Bolzoni, *La rete delle immagini*.

²⁸ Tuija Aiononen's eagerly awaited PhD dissertation, *Words and Their Meanings - Studies in the history of the early distinctiones collections*, will be the first real reflection upon the nature of distinction collections, and the first major analysis of their contents.

²⁹ Only two major collections benefitted from a modern critical edition: the *Distinctiones* by Ralf of Longchamp, and the *Distinctiones Abel* by Petrus Cantor. Alain de Lille's *Summa quot modis* and the anonymous *Liber qui dicitur Angelus* both have a more or less flawed edition in the *Patrologia Latina* (the latter under the name of Rabanus Maurus).

³⁰ The bibliography on *exempla* is so extensive that we can only advise the reader to consult the online *Bibliographie des Exempla* (Bibliex) maintained by the GAHOM research group, and the *Thesaurus Exemplorum Medii Aevi* database [<https://thema.huma-num.fr>].

in itself, leading us to question the very definition of such collections, the limits of the genre and its relations with other types of literature also blooming in the thirteenth century, like commentaries of the Psalms, dictionaries or *summae* of preaching material arranged in an alphabetical order.

Research on *distinctiones* has certainly been made difficult by the lack of reference tools and the sheer amount of manuscript data. But this dire situation is changing: for a few years now, the *Distinguo* project has been building a knowledge base about the contents of *distinctiones* collections.³⁷ At the time of writing (Spring 2025), *Distinguo* indexes 35 collections in its database (from the late 12th c. to the 15th c.), totalling 24,272 *distinctio* entries in all, of which 7,179 include a schematic abstract (across 13 collections), and 5,972 are available in full text (1,847,636 words in total, across 16 collections). This wealth of easily accessible data and information allows scholars to consider the study of *distinctiones* at a different scale. In this context of blooming opportunities, I will simply conclude by suggesting some research questions for the future. The global approach of the collections could support, for instance, the study of the construction of *distinctiones* and its potential evolutions. Which words, notions or lexical fields were privileged? Can we see *topoi* emerging in the way words or notions were treated, or on the contrary was there a great versatility? What was the place of the *distinctio* as a dialectical device in scholastic argumentation? Could it shed new light on the intrusion of the *disputatio* into *predicatio*? The link between *distinctiones* and mnemotechnics is also worth investigating, as I mentioned earlier; their riming structure or logical patterns were certainly an important element when committing a sermon to memory – a point that did not escape many users of medieval sermon manuscripts. Finally, the relationship between *distinctiones* collections and the *distinctiones* effectively used in sermons warrants a thorough study. To what extent did the preachers actually use those collections in their sermons, treatises or *summae*? When they did, how did they transform the material to merge them into their own creations?³⁸ How were *distinctiones* combined, in the sermons, with other elements (*exempla*, authorities, *similitudines*, interpretation of biblical names, etc.)? What was their function in those sermons: as a mere backbone, a didactical device, or a tool to captivate the audience and drive a point home?³⁹ Finally, did the actual use of *distinctiones* conform to the recommendations of the *artes praedicandi*, those ‘arts of preaching’ which provided preachers with a means to taught preachers how to make sermons? Answering these many questions will no doubt take years, but it will give us a better understanding of intellectual work in the Middle Ages.

³⁷ See: <http://distinguo.huma-num.fr>

³⁸ Only a few works have demonstrated such phenomena: Nicole Bériou, in her book on Ranulphe de la Houblonnière, identified his use of a distinction by Maurice de Provins in a sermon (Bériou, *La Prédication de Ranulphe de la Houblonnière*). See also ‘Did Giordano da Pisa Use the *Distinctiones* of Nicolas Gorran?’, and Thouzellier, *Catharisme et Valdésisme en Languedoc*, 322-345 (on the *distinctiones* by Durand de Huesca).

³⁹ The systematic indexation of *distinctiones* used in sermons, as is the case for the digital edition of the sermons by James of Voragine on <http://www.sermones.net>, is extremely useful to the study of these phenomena. It is unfortunately still very rare to find such an index in sermon editions.

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Appendix 1 – Three distinctiones on uinum

1.a – Liber qui dicitur Angelus

The *Liber qui dicitur Angelus* is a late twelfth-century collection of *distinctiones*, probably of Cistercian origin. For more information, see Marjorie Burghart. 'Anonymous (Garnier de Rochefort ?), *Liber qui dicitur Angelus*'. In *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2021-06-11. Accessible online: <https://distinguo.humanum.fr/collections/anonymous-angelus>

Text transcribed from a late 12th c. manuscript: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 588, f. 46ra. On this manuscript, see <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc62038k>

Uinum est arcanum deitatis, ut in Parabolis: *Miscuit uinum*, <Pr. 9, 2> quia sapientia per carnem apparens deitatis nobis reuelauit secretum.

Uinum feruor Spiritus sancti, unde in Psalmo: *Et uinum letificat cor hominis*, <Ps. 103, 15> id est feruor Spiritus sancti ueram menti hominis letitiam infundit.

Uinum scientia legis, ut in Cantico: *Meliora sunt ubera tua uino*, <Ct. 1, 1> quia sapientia Ecclesie excedit scientiam legis.

Uinum uerbum Euangelii, ut in Cantico:⁴⁰ *Guttur tuum sicut optimum uinum* <Ct. 7, 9> quia predicatorum eius sanctum nuntiant Euangelium.

Uinum contemplatiuus quisque, ut in Cantico: *Bibi uinum meum cum lacte meo*, <Ct. 5, 1> id est incorporauit⁴¹ mihi contemplatiuos simul et actiuos.

Uinum intelligentia spiritualis, ut in Euangelio: *Tu autem seruasti bonum uinum*, <Jn. 2, 10> id est spiritualibus spirituales seruasti intellectum.

Uinum sanguis Christi, ut in Genesi: *Lauabit uino stolam suam* <Gn. 49, 11> id est effusione sanguinis sui mundabit Ecclesiam suam.

Uinum compunctio, ut in Psalmo: *Potasti nos uino compunctionis*. <Ps. 59, 5>

Uinum correptio, ut in Euangelio: *Infundens oleum et uinum*, <Lc. 10, 34> id est consolationem et correptionem.

Uinum contemplatio, ut in Apocalypsi: *Et uinum et oleum ne leseris*, <Apoc. 6, 6> id est contemplationem et actionem ne corrumpas.

Uinum dilectio, ut in Cantico: *Et dabo tibi potum*⁴² *ex uino condito*, <Ct. 8, 2> id est dabo tibi letitiam ex amore uero.

Uinum delectatio peccati, ut in Iohanne: *Et ululate, omnes qui bibitis uinum in dulcedine* <Joel 1, 5> id est penitemini uniuersi qui consentitis delectationi in peccatis.

Uinum amor mundi huius, ut in Parabolis: *Ne intuearis*⁴³ *uinum, quando flauescit, cum splenderit in uitro color eius*, <Pr. 23, 31> id est ne delecteris amore mundi, quando allicit, cum blandimento fragili arriserit decor eius.

Uinum uindicta, ut in Apocalypsi: *Et hic bibet de uino ire Dei*, <Apoc. 14, 10> id est sentiet uindictam Dei quam iudicium Dei ei⁴⁴ inferet.

⁴⁰ cantico meliora ... ut in cantico] *om. ante corr. al. man. in marg.*

⁴¹ incorporauit] *parauit ante corr. al. man.*

⁴² potum] *potulum Vulg.*

⁴³ intuearis] *Vulg., intueris in ms*

⁴⁴ ei] *om. ante corr. al. man.*

1.b - *Distinctiones Mauricii*

The *Distinctiones Mauricii* is a collection from the third quarter of the thirteenth century. For more information, see Damien Ruiz, Tuija Ainonen. 'Mauritius Hibernicus, *Distinctiones Mauricii*'. in *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2021-06-11. Accessible online: <https://distinguo.humanum.fr/collections/mauritus-hibernicus-distinctiones>

Text transcribed from a 13th c. manuscript: Besançon, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 232, f. 246ra. On this manuscript, see Auguste Castan, *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France. Départements – Tome XXXII. Besançon. Tome I. Introduction - Fonds général (1)*. Paris : Plon-Nourrit, 1897.

Multiplex est uinum: culpe, pene, doctrine, et gratie.

Uinum culpe tria facit: generat luxuriam et tumultum, Prouer. XX: *Luxuriosa res est uinum et tumultuosa ebrietas*. <Pr. 20, 1> Item dolorem et remorsum, Prouer. XXIII: *Ne intuearis uinum quando flauescit*, <Pr. 23, 31> et post in fine: *mordebit ubi coluber*. <Pr. 23, 32> Item miseriam et ululatum. Joel. II: *Ululate, qui bibitis uinum in dulcedine*. <Joel 1, 5>

Item est uinum pene, et hoc triplex. Passionis dominice, Gen. XLIX: *Lauabit in uino stolam suam*. <Gn. 49, 11> Item presentis miserie, Ps.: *Calix in manu Domini uini meri*. <Ps. 74, 9> Item uindictae eterne, unde in Apocalypsi dicitur de dampnando quod ipse bibet de uino ire Dei. <Apoc. 14, 10>

Item uinum gratie, de quo dicitur in Cant.: *Bibi uinum meum cum lacte meo*, <Ct. 5, 1> id est humanam gratiam et munditiam carnis, et hoc pungit per cumpunctionem, Ps.: *Potasti nos uino compunctionis*, <Ps. 59, 5> Ps.: *Uinum letificet cor hominis*. <Ps. 103, 15> Item clarificat per fidem, Gen. XLIX: *Pulciores sunt oculi eius uino*, <Gn. 49, 12> id est intellectus et affectus.

Item est uinum doctrine, Io. II: *Tu autem seruasti uinum bonum usque adhuc*. <Jn. 2, 10> Et istud uinum sanat, unde et Samaritanus infudit uinum et oleum super uulnera sauciati. <Cf. Lc. 10, 34> Item odorem bone doctrine generat, et ideo sponse, Cant. I: *Meliora sunt ubera tua uino*. <Ct. 1, 1> Item ad recte loquendo informat, et ideo dicitur in Cant.: *Guttur tuum sicut uinum optimum*. <Ct. 7, 9>

1.c - *Nicolas de Gorran, Distinctiones*

The *Distinctiones* by Nicolas de Gorran are a collection of distinctions from the last quarter of the thirteenth century. For more information, see Marjorie Burghart. 'Nicolas de Gorran, *Distinctiones*'. In *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2021-06-11. Accessible online: <https://distinguo.humanum.fr/collections/nicolas-de-gorran-distinctiones>

Text transcribed from a late 13th – early 14th c. manuscript: Avignon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 308, f. 261vb-262ra. On this manuscript, see Léon-Honoré Labande. *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France – Départements – Tome XXVII – Avignon (tome I)*, Paris : Plon-Nourrit, 1894, 224-225.

Uinum uendit in taberna sua Dyabolus, mundus, Deus. Dyabolus uinum infectum, mundus uinum suspectum, Deus electum.

Dyabolus autem in taberna sua uinum triplex exponit.

Primum suggestionis oblate⁴⁵ quod decipit⁴⁶ ex colore, quia sub specie uini dat uenenum. Quod enim lucet non est aurum. Prouer. 23: *Non intuearis uinum quando flauescit, quando in uitro splenderit color eius; ingreditur etc.*, <Pr. 23, 31> sic de uoluptate et cupiditate.

Secundo delectationis assumpte quod decipit ex sapore, quia consentitur temptationi propter delectationem, sicut auis uadit ad laqueum propter granum. Prouer. 21: *Qui amat uinum et pinguis non ditabitur.* <Pr. 21, 17> Ysa. V : *Ue qui potentes estis ad bibendum uinum etc.* <Is. 5, 22>

Tertio dampnationis quod perimit ex uigore, quia in terram forte est ut fel potatum occidit eternaliter. Amos II: *Dabunt uinum dampnatorum in domo.* <Am. 2, 8> Deuter. 22: *Fel draconum uinum eorum et uenenum.* <Deut. 32, 33>

Item mundus in taberna sua exponit triplex uinum.

Primum, uanitatis in honoribus. II Esdre 3: *O uiri, quam preualet uinum! Hiis etiam qui dabunt illud, etc.*, <I Esd. 3, 18> ad literam sicut ebrius dedignatur habere dominum uel magistrum uel paupertatem ita superbet. Ps.: *Aduersum me loquebantur qui sedebant.* <Ps. 68, 13>

Secundum, uoluptatis in deliciis. Eph. V: *Nolite inebriari uino in quo est luxuria,* <Eph. 5, 18> Est 'Venus etiam in uinis, ignis in igne furit⁴⁷.⁴⁸ Eccli. XV: *Uinum et mulieres apostatare faciunt etiam sapientes etc.* <Eccli. 19, 2>

Tertium falsitatis in diuitiis, quia promittens⁴⁹ prosperitatem concludit aduersitatem, sicut ebrii se reputant aliis tutiores, sed quando uinum digestum est aliud dicunt. II Esdre 3: *Non meminit tristitiam et debitum.* <I Esd. 3, 20> Abac. II: *Quomodo uinum potantem decipit,*⁵⁰ *sic superbus.* <Hab. 2, 5>

Item Deus in taberna sua exponit triplex uinum.⁵¹

Primo uinum contritionis, quod sanat peccatum proprium et quasi uinum pressoratum, asperum et durum ad bibendum. Ps.: *Ostendisti populo tuo*⁵² *dura; potasti nos uino.* <Ps. 59, 5>

Secundo compassionis, quod sanat malum alienum, quod est quasi uinum mixtum ex propria misericordia et aliena miseria. Luc. X, infudit Samaritanus uinum. <Cf. Lc. 10, 34>

Tertio deuotionis, quod letificat Deum et est suauissimum propter internam dulcedinem. Cant. V: *Bibi uinum meum cum lacte meo.* <Ct. 5, 1> Eccli XI: *Uinum et musica letificat cor hominis.* <Eccli. 40, 20>

Quarto, sapientie salutaris quod non debilitat sed fortificat uinum. Est enim forte et maturum et clarum. Zach. 9: *Quid bonum et quid pulchrum nisi frumentum electorum et uinum germinans uirgines?* <Zach. 9, 17> Materiale enim uinum corrumpit uirgines, illud germinat. Sed multi uinum illud adaquant, principibus adulando et minus rigide predicando. Ysa. I: *Uinum tuum mixtum est aqua.* <Is. 1, 22> Hii mutant uinum in aqua.

Quinto, uinum eterne beatitudinis, quod purgat omnem miseriam et est sapidissimum paulus semel, scilicet in raptu gustauit et postmodum non tantum capucium sed capud impignorauit. Ysa. LV: *Uenite, et emite absque argento et absque ulla commutatione* <Is. 55, 1> quia

⁴⁵ oblate] corrigamus, oblato sic in ms

⁴⁶ decipit] corrigamus, recipit in ms

⁴⁷ furit] facit corr. al. man. in marg. in ms

⁴⁸ Ouid, *Ars amatoria*, 1.244

⁴⁹ promittens] corrigamus, permittens in ms

⁵⁰ Eccli. VII add. in ms

⁵¹ Three parts are announced, but five are actually present.

⁵² populo tuo] om. ante corr. in marg.

sufficit bona uoluntas ei qui plus non potest uinum, id est gaudium de deitate, et lac, gaudium de humanitate. Hester I: *Uinum quoque, ut magnificentia regia dignum erat, habundans,⁵³ et precipuum ponebatur.* <Est. 1, 7>

Appendix 2 - Distinction on oliua (the olive tree) used in a sermon

This *distinctio* is taken from a sermon *In celebratione ordinum* (RLS 194) belonging to the *Sermones ad status* composed by Gilbert of Tournai, OFM, between 1261 and his death in 1284.

Text of the *distinctio* transcribed from a late 13th c. manuscript: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 15943, f. 17v-19v.

Habet autem oliua in ligno rectitudinem, in foliis uirentibus pulcritudinem, in fructu dulcedinem. In hiis enim tribus signantur tres species puritatis que sunt rectitudo intentionis, honestas et pulcritudo conuersationis, fructus et dulcedo deuotionis.

De primo, Apo. XI : *Hi sunt due oliue et duo candelabra lucentia in conspectu Domini terre stantes.* <Apoc. 11, 4> Bene stantes, quia electi per intentionem ad celestia, non incuruati per cupiditatem ad terrena, sicut illi qui non attendunt fructum sed datum et importune se ingerunt. Cum tamen dicat Decretum, 'queratur cogendus, rogatus discedat, inuitatus fugiat. Sola illi suffragetur necessitas excusandi'.⁵⁴ Hec est in omni sacerdote regula generalis. Si aliter in aliquo actum est, regula uiolata est.

De secundo, Gen. VIII : uenit columba ad archam *portans ramum oliue uirentibus foliis in ore suo,* <Gn. 8, 11> sicut faciunt qui reuertuntur ad conscientiam suam nichil inuenientes in ea uiciosum quod displiceat Deo, uel inhonestum displiceat proximo. Non sicut coruus qui ad archam non reuertitur, uel quia cadauere cupiditatis illectus est, uel quia aquis carnalitatis interceptus est. Hii sunt qui Ecclesiam polluunt, quia honestatem uite non custodiunt. Sed fingamus aliquam maximi regis filiam excellentem pulcritudine et moribus omnes uiros et mulieres, desponsatam sponso qui ad eam afficitur tanto amore et zelo quanto nullus alius amatorum posset affici. Si talis sponsus audiret de sponsa sua quod aliquis uilissimus lecator⁵⁵ et turpissimus et despectissimus in omni genere scientie uite et morum uellet eam ducere in coniugem, multum indignaretur. Ita et in proposito indignatur Dominus et ulciscitur ualde in eos qui inhoneste tractant Ecclesiam sponsam Christi.

De tertio, II Reg. XII⁵⁶ : *Dauid ascendebat cliuum oliuarum, scandens et flens, aperto capite et nudis pedibus incedens.* <II Reg. 15, 30> Hic Dauid tenet typum anime contemplatiue que scandit proficiendo per deuotionem, flet per contritionem, aperto capite dum uerecundatur per peccatorum recordationem, nudis pedibus per puram confessionem. Et bene dicitur flet quia bene incombit flere sacerdotibus et prelatis cum eorum peccata grauiora sint quam peccata subditorum. Unde Crisostomus, VI^o libro *De dignitate sacerdotum*⁵⁷ : Offerri iubebat Dominus pro sacerdotis errore

⁵³ habundans] *corrigamus, habundas in ms*

⁵⁴ *Codex Iustiniani, lib. I, 3.30 4-5*

⁵⁵ 'Lecator': synonym for 'gulosus'. Cf. 'Lecator' (by C. du Cange, 1678), in *Glossarium mediæ et infimæ latinitatis*, du Cange et al., édition augmentée, Niort, L. Favre, 1883-1887, t. 5, col. 050b.

⁵⁶ XII] *sic in ms., XV Vulg.*

⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio*, lib. VI, c. 11.

sacrificium tantum quantum pro totius populi delicto quo nichil aliud iudicatur quam quod maiore indigent adiumento uulnera sacerdotis et tanto quanto simul uniuersi populi multitudo. Maiore autem non egerent nisi maiora iudicarentur, grauiora autem efficiuntur non conditione operis sed dignitate facientis.